WALKING TOURS OF ART DECO NEW YORK

based on
SKYSCRAPER STYLE
Art Deco New York
A New Book by
Cervin Robinson &
Rosemarie Haag Bletter

OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS

offsite
F
128.18
.R59
1985

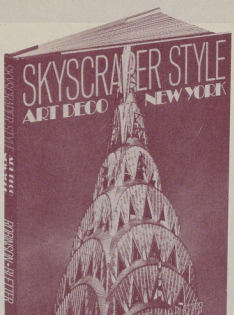
SKYSCRAPER STYLE
Art Deco New York

by
Cervin Robinson & Rosemarie Haag Bletter

"Don't sell Art Deco short," wrote Ada Louise Huxtable in a recent *New York Times Magazine* article. "It produced some of the most notable monuments of a uniquely American contribution to architectural history, the skyscraper....The Chrysler Building and Radio City Music Hall are immortal."

Ignored or forgotten for some forty years by the public as well as by "official" architectural history, Art Deco buildings are suddenly the subject of great attention, with more and more magazine articles discussing them, with architectural exhibitions featuring them, with debates raging over landmark status for more and more buildings. *Skyscraper Style* proves that the attention is richly deserved. The magnificent photographs by one of America's finest architectural photographers do full justice to these remarkable buildings of the 1920s and '30s. Two complementary essays point out the style's main features, its European and American sources, its development, as well as the major buildings and their architects' intentions in designing them.

While the Art Deco style in architecture was nation- and world-wide, it was first of all the style of the modern metropolis — of Gotham — of which New York City is the prime example. Hence Robinson and Bletter concentrate on New York, which boasts the finest collection of Art Deco architecture in the world. These buildings happen to be some of the most well known in the city, including such tourist attractions as the Empire

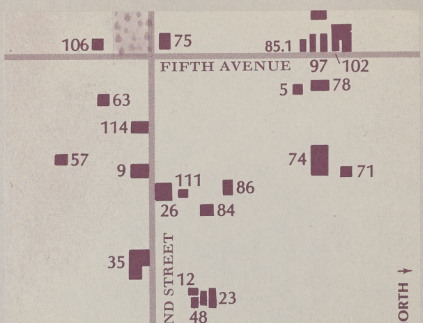


Price $20.00

State Building, the Chrysler Building, and Rockefeller Center; stores like Bloomingdale's, Bonwit Teller's, and Tiffany's; the West Side Highway, the Waldorf-Astoria, the American Stock Exchange; and also innumerable little-known banks, apartment buildings, and office buildings.

Art Deco is a style that speaks directly to many people, a style one can easily relate to. Its architects were dramatists playing to an audience. They tried to make their buildings appeal to the viewer both from a distance and from nearby in certain theatrical and basically human ways. They decorated the immediate points of contact — the entrances, lobbies, elevator doors, lighting fixtures; and they called attention to the bases and tops of buildings, with Art Deco forms and often with color. In addition, the buildings were related to the streets they faced (as buildings have not been since), and their designers tried to introduce a new concept of multilevel traffic circulation into the metropolis they found themselves rebuilding.

As Ada Louise Huxtable wrote, "The time has come to analyze [Art Deco] historically and philosophically, to determine its roots and its rationale, to understand its revived appeal and to evaluate its products." Thus this book will prove invaluable to the historian of art and architecture. It also makes a wonderful souvenir for visitors to the city. But perhaps most of all it will be treasured by the city dweller who loves his city — and who will now be able to look at his familiar surroundings in a new, more appreciative way.



WALKING TOUR NUMBER ONE

From Fifth Avenue and 39th Street toward the U.N.

106. **Kress Building. Fifth Avenue and 39th Street.**
Edward F. Sibbert, 1935.
Three sales floors (one double height at ground level, two with luncheonette and cafeteria below grade). Offices above.

75. **500 Fifth Avenue. At 42nd Street.**
Shreve, Lamb & Harmon, 1930-31.
An office building with ground floor shops.

63. **Office Tower, southeast corner 40th Street and Madison Avenue.**
Kenneth Franzheim, 1930.

114. **Airlines Building. 42nd and 41st Streets and Park Avenue.**
John B. Peterkin, 1939-40.
Formerly airlines booking offices, with an underground parking garage, and restaurants. Originally to have incorporated a theater in the space now long occupied by a Horn & Hardart.

9. **Chanin Building. Lexington Avenue at 41st and 42nd Streets.**
Sloan & Robertson, 1927-30.
An office building; lobby with shops at ground level; an entrance to Grand Central subway station below. Originally had a theater on 50th floor and a bus station for the Baltimore and Ohio in basement.

26. **Chrysler Building. Lexington Avenue at 42nd and 43rd Streets.**
William Van Alen, 1928-30.
An office tower with a (private) luncheon club at its top and shops, bank, restaurants, and subway entrance at ground floor and basement levels.

AVERY
DURST

111. **Provident Loan Society Branch, 43rd Street. Between Lexington and Third Avenues.**
Renwick, Aspinwall & Guard, 1938.

35. **News Building. 42nd and 41st Streets and Second Avenue.**
Howells and Hood, 1929-30.
An office building which incorporates offices and a newspaper printing plant for the Daily News.

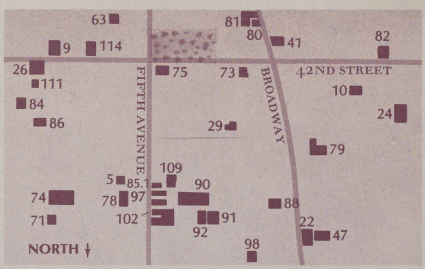
12. **Beaux-Arts Institute of Design. 44th Street between First and Second Avenues.**
Dennison & Hirons, 1928.
Originally headquarters of the American Beaux-Arts educational system.

48. **Beaux-Arts Apartment Hotel. 44th Street between First and Second Avenues.**
Murchison & Hood, Godley & Fouilhoux, 1929-30.
Apartment blocks on either side of the street and named after the adjacent Institute.

8. **Panhellenic Tower. First Avenue just east of 49th Street.**
John Mead Howells, 1927-30.
Originally apartments; now a hotel.

LEGEND

The **number** of each building corresponds to its plate number in the book and location on the maps. The **name and address** of the building appear in bold face type. The **architect** and **year of construction** appear on the next line. Pertinent information about the building's **history and use** follows.



WALKING TOUR NUMBER TWO

From 51st and Lexington to the Old McGraw-Hill Building

71. **RCA Victor Building. Lexington Ave. and 51st St.**
Cross & Cross, 1930-31.
Offices; long since the General Electric Building.

74. **Waldorf-Astoria Hotel. Park and Lexington Aves. and 49th and 50th Sts.**
Schultze & Weaver, 1930-31.

85.1. **Goelet Office Building. Fifth Ave. and 49th St.**
E.H. Faile Co., 1930-32.

90. **RCA Building. Rockefeller Plaza and 49th and 50th Sts.**
Associated Architects, 1931-33.
Offices, broadcasting studios, restaurants, and shopping arcades.

92. **Radio City Music Hall. Sixth Ave. and 50th St.**
Associated Architects, 1931-32.

98. **City of New York Central Substation. 53rd St. between Sixth and Seventh Aves.**
1932.
Houses electrical equipment for use in subways.

22. **Broadway Block Building. At Broadway and 51st and 52nd Sts.**
Schultze & Weaver, 1928-29.
Offices and stores.

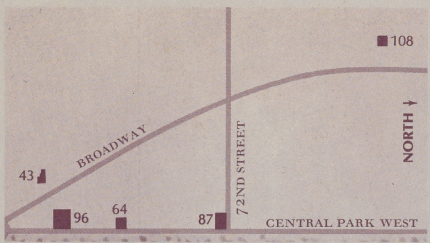
47. **Hollywood Theater (now Mark Hellinger). 51st St. between Broadway and Eighth Ave.**
T. W. Lamb, 1929-30.

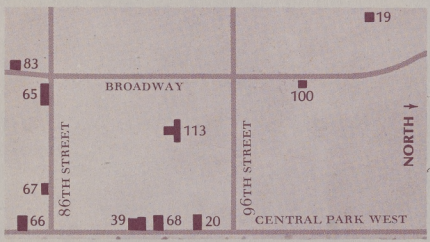
79. **Hotel Edison. 47th St. between Duffy Square and Eighth Ave.**
H. J. Knapp, 1930-31.

10. **Manufacturers Trust Branch, Eighth Ave. and 43rd St.**
Dennison & Hirons, 1927-28?

24. **Film Center Building. Ninth Ave. at 44th and 45th Sts.**
Buchman & Kahn, 1928-29.
Tenants are firms handling motion picture film.

82. **McGraw-Hill Building. 42nd and 41st Sts. between Eighth and Ninth Aves.**
Hood, Godley & Fouilhoux, 1930-31.
Commercial space; originally publishing firm's offices and printing plant.





WALKING TOUR NUMBER THREE

North on Central Park West to 92nd Street and across to Riverside Drive

96. **Century Apartments. Central Park West at 62nd and 63rd Streets.**
Office of Irwin S. Chanin, 1932.

64. **Apartments, Central Park West at 66th Street.**
Schwartz & Gross, 1930.

87. **Majestic Apartments. Central Park West at 71st and 72nd Streets.**
Office of Irwin S. Chanin, 1931.

66. **Apartments, Central Park West and 84th Street.**
Schwartz & Gross, 1930.

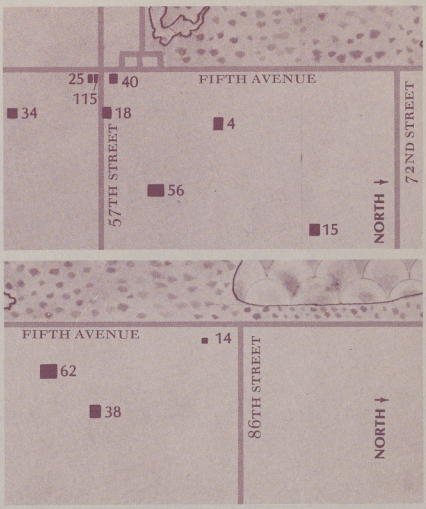
39. **The Eldorado. Central Park West at 90th and 91st Streets.**
Margon & Holder, 1929-30.

68. **The Ardsley. Central Park West and 92nd Street.**
Emery Roth, 1930-31.

113. **Joan of Arc Junior High School. 92nd and 93rd Streets between Columbus and Amsterdam Avenues.**
Eric Kebbon, 1939-40.

100. **Midtown Theater. Broadway between 99th and 100th Streets.**
Boak & Paris, 1933.

19. **Master Building. Riverside Drive and 103rd Street.**
Helmle, Corbett & Harrison and Sugarman & Berger, 1928-1929.
An apartment hotel originally incorporating a school of arts, a museum and a restaurant.



WALKING TOUR NUMBER FOUR

From Bonwit Teller to the Metropolitan

25. **Stewart & Company (subsequently Bonwit Teller) Store. Fifth Avenue at 56th Street.**
Warren & Wetmore (altered by Ely Jacques Kahn), 1928-30.

115. **Tiffany Store. Fifth Avenue and 57th Street.**
Cross & Cross, 1939-40.

40. **Squibb Building. Fifth Avenue at 58th Street.**
Buchman & Kahn, 1929-30.
Offices with an F.A.O. Schwarz store at ground level.

18. **Fuller Building. 57th Street and Madison Avenue.**
Walker & Gillette, 1928-29.
Offices.

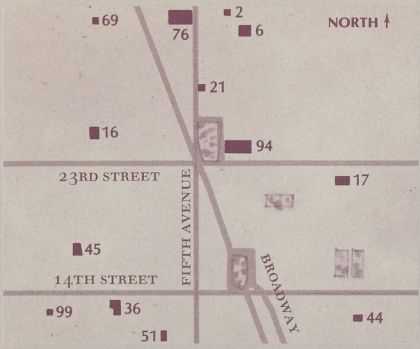
56. **Bloomingdale's Store on Lexington Avenue. At 59th and 60th Streets.**
Starrett & Van Vleck, 1930.

4. **The Lowell. 63rd Street between Park and Madison Avenues.**
Henry S. Churchill and Herbert Lippmann, 1926.
Apartments and a ground floor restaurant.

15. **Apartments, 68th Street and Third Avenue.**
George & Edward Blum, 1928.

38. **Apartments, Park Avenue and 79th Street, southeast corner.**
Sloan & Robertson, 1929-30.

14. **Apartments, 3 East 84th Street. Off Fifth Avenue.**
Howells & Hood, 1928.



WALKING TOUR NUMBER FIVE

From the Village to Number Two Park Avenue

51. **New School for Social Research. 12th Street between Fifth and Sixth Avenues.**
Joseph Urban, 1929-30.

36. **Salvation Army Building. 13th and 14th Streets between Sixth and Seventh Avenues.**
Voorhees, Gmelin & Walker, 1929-30.
Offices, a temple, and a women's dormitory.

45. **Telephone Building. West 17th and 18th Streets between Seventh and Eighth Avenues.**
Voorhees, Gmelin & Walker, 1929-30.

16. **275 Seventh Avenue. At 25th and 26th Streets.**
Buchman & Kahn, 1928.
A garment district loft building.

94. **Metropolitan Life, North Building. Park Avenue, Madison Square, and 24th and 25th Streets.**
H. W. Corbett and D. E. Waide, 1931-33.

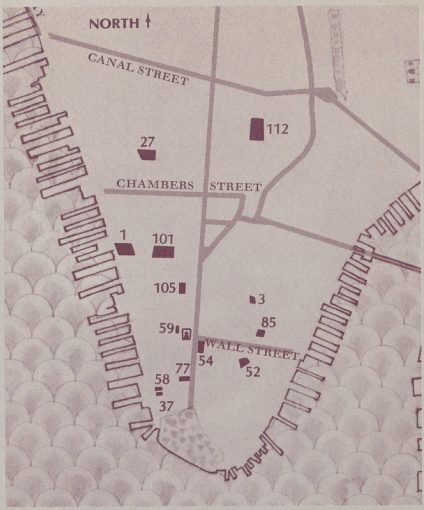
21. **261 Fifth Avenue. At 29th Street.**
Buchman & Kahn, 1928-29.
Garment district building.

69. **Horn & Hardart, 33rd Street between Seventh Avenue and Greeley Square.**
Louis Allen Abramson, 1930-31.

76. **Empire State Building. Fifth Avenue and 33rd and 34th Streets.**
Shreve, Lamb & Harmon, 1930-31.
Offices with observation levels and lobby shops, restaurants, and post office.

2. **Cheney Brothers Store. Southeast corner of Madison and 34th Street.**
Ferrobrandt and Howard Greenley, 1925.
New York outlet of the silk company for which H.H. Richardson designed the Cheney Block in Hartford.

6. **Park Avenue Building. At 32nd and 33d Streets.**
Buchman & Kahn, 1927.
Offices.



WALKING TOUR NUMBER SIX

From the Tombs to the Battery

112. **Criminal Courts Building. White, Baxter, and Leonard Streets.**
H. W. Corbett, 1939.

27. **Western Union Building. Hudson, Thomas, and Worth Streets and West Broadway.**
Voorhees, Gmelin & Walker, 1928-30.

1. **Barclay-Vesey Building. Barclay, Vesey, Washington, and West Streets.**
McKenzie, Voorhees & Gmelin, 1923-26.
Houses telephone equipment; until recently headquarters of New York Telephone Company.

101. **Federal Office Building. Vesey, Church, and Barclay Streets and West Broadway.**
Cross & Cross, 1933-35.

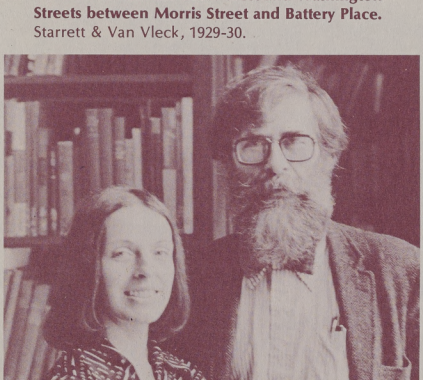
105. **East River Savings Bank. Trinity Place and Cortlandt and Dey Streets.**
Walker & Gillette, 1934-35.

3. **Insurance Center Office Building. John, Platt, and Gold Streets.**
Buchman & Kahn, 1926-27.

85. **60 Wall Tower. Pine, Pearl, and Cedar Streets.**
Clinton & Russell, Holton & George, 1930-32.
Cities Service Company building.

52. **City Bank Farmers Trust Building. William, Hanover, and Beaver Streets and Exchange Place.**
Cross & Cross, 1929-31.

59. **Curb Exchange Facade. Trinity Place between Thames and Rector Streets.**
Starrett & Van Vleck, 1930.
Now the American Stock Exchange.
54. **Irving Trust Building. Wall and New Streets and Broadway.**
Voorhees, Gmelin, & Walker, 1929-32.
77. **29 Broadway. Morris Street and Trinity Place.**
Sloan & Robertson, 1930-31.
Offices.
58. **21 West Street. Morris and Washington Streets.**
Starrett & Van Vleck, 1930.
Offices.
37. **Downtown Athletic Club. West and Washington Streets between Morris Street and Battery Place.**
Starrett & Van Vleck, 1929-30.

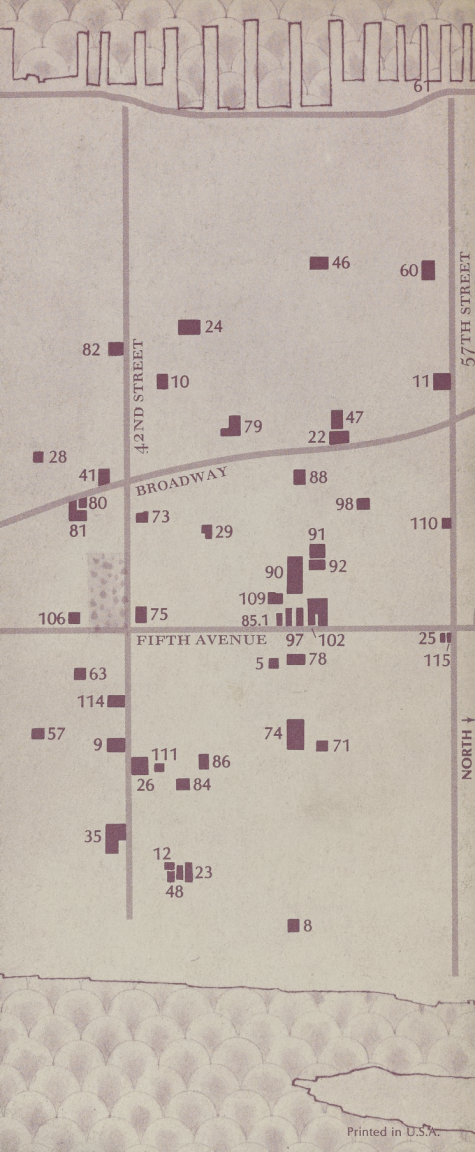


Photograph by Eric Maristany

About the Authors

Cervin Robinson is an architectural historian, photographer, and writer and has contributed to *The Architectural Review, Architecture PLUS, Progressive Architecture, The Architectural Forum,* and the *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians.*

Rosemarie Haag Bletter is an architectural historian and Assistant Professor at Columbia. She has written on the Spanish architect Jose Vilaseca and on the German Expressionist Bruno Taut and is preparing an annotated anthology of the architectural theory of Gottfried Semper.



Printed in U.S.A.